

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for authenticating a digital image comprising:

receiving a first digital image at an authentication
5 center, the first digital image having an associated serial number and being encrypted;

storing the first digital image at the authentication center in response to the associated serial number;

receiving a second digital image at the authentication
10 center, the second digital image being associated with the serial number;

decrypting the first digital image to generate a third digital image;

comparing the second digital image to the third
15 digital image; and

reporting the result of the comparison.

2. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 1 further comprising associating a
20 camera key with each serial number and wherein decrypting the first digital image comprises decrypting the first digital image in response to the camera key associated with the serial number.

3. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 2 further comprising:

generating the camera key at the authentication center;

generating the serial number at the authentication
30 center; and

associating the camera key with the serial number.

4. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 2 further comprising encrypting the camera key in response a first key at the authentication center.

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5. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 4 further comprising encrypting the first key in response to a second key at the authentication center.

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6. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 5 further comprising re-encrypting the first key at predetermined time intervals in response to a third key at the authentication center.

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7. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 1, wherein comparing the second digital image comprises comparing each bit of the second image to each bit of the third image.

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8. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 1 further comprising:

storing a plurality of distinct activator identifiers at the authentication center;

25 associating a unique activator key with each activator identifier; and

communicating a selected one of the activator identifiers and associated activator key to an activator.

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9. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 8, wherein communicating the selected one of the activator identifiers and associated activator key is performed securely.

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10. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 1 further comprising:

storing a plurality of distinct entity identifiers at the authentication center;

5 associating a unique entity key with each entity identifier; and

communicating a selected one of the entity identifiers and associated entity key to a verifying entity.

10 11. The method for authenticating digital images according to Claim 10, wherein communicating the selected one of the activator identifiers and associated activator key is performed securely.

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12. A system for authenticating a digital image comprising:

an authentication center operable to:

5 receive a first digital image, the first digital image having an associated serial number and being encrypted;

store the first digital image in response to the associated serial number;

10 receive a second digital image, the second digital image being associated with the serial number;

decrypt the first digital image to generate a third digital image;

compare the second digital image to the third digital image; and

15 report the result of the comparison.

13. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 12, wherein the authentication center is further operable to associate a camera key with each serial
20 number and wherein decrypting the first digital image comprises decrypting the first digital image in response to the camera key associated with the serial number.

14. The system for authenticating digital images
25 according to Claim 13, wherein the authentication center is further operable to:

generate the camera key;

generate the serial number; and

associate the camera key with the serial number.

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15. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 13, wherein the authentication center is further operable to encrypt the camera key in response a first key.

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16. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 15, wherein the authentication center is further operable to encrypt the first key in response to a
5 second key.

17. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 16, wherein the authentication center is further operable to re-encrypt the first key at
10 predetermined time intervals in response to a third key.

18. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 12, wherein the authentication center is further operable to compare each bit of the second image to
15 each bit of the third image.

19. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 12, wherein the authentication center is further operable to:

20 store a plurality of distinct activator identifiers;
associate a unique activator key with each activator identifier; and

communicate a selected one of the activator identifiers and associated activator key to an activator.
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20. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 19, wherein communicating the selected one of the activator identifiers and associated activator key is performed securely.
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21. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 12, wherein the authentication center is further operable to:

- store a plurality of distinct entity identifiers;
- 5 associate a unique entity key with each entity identifier; and
- communicate a selected one of the entity identifiers and associated entity key to a verifying entity.

- 10 22. The system for authenticating digital images according to Claim 21, wherein communicating the selected one of the activator identifiers and associated activator key is performed securely.

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